

Baptism In Water And In The Holy Spirit

'Go and make disciples of all nations; baptising them into the name of Jesus' (Matthew 28:19). 'They who believe and are baptised will be saved but they who do not believe will be condemned' (Mark 16:16). 'Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus our Messiah for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit' (Acts 2:38). For those people who think baptism is unimportant, reading these verses should make them realise if there is no baptism, there can be no resurrection to new life.

Why should we be baptised in water?

- (1) Because Jesus was baptised and He is our example (Matthew 3:13 to 17).
- (2) To show our acceptance of the Gospel (Acts 2:41).
- (3) It is the pledge of a good conscience towards God (1 Peter 3:21).
- (4) To symbolise the washing away and cleansing of our former sins (Acts 22:16).
- (5) It tells the world we are now part of the body of believers (1 Corinthians 12:13).
- (6) It is a command of Jesus (Matthew 28:19).
- (7) Baptism symbolises our 'burial' and being 'raised' with Jesus to new life (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12).
- (8) Without water baptism there can be no resurrection, either to new life while we are on earth or to new life in our new resurrected bodies after we leave this earth in the final resurrection to come. Since it was necessary for Jesus to be baptised to achieve resurrection, then it is necessary for His disciples to be baptised to achieve resurrection, for no disciple is above their teacher nor a servant above their Lord (Matthew 10:24). If people refuse to be baptised, they are refusing to be forgiven and joined together with the name of Jesus in His death, burial and resurrection and may end up being condemned for being disobedient.

Water baptism is a believers' baptism and it is a physical act expressing a spiritual event. In water baptism we are saying in effect, that we share with Jesus the fact of His death and resurrection, and it confirms our covenant agreement made before we are baptised. Obviously the person baptised is not dying for sin because Jesus did that for us, but they are making a public testimony; a declaration of their commitment to Jesus and His work. As the believers go into the water and are completely immersed, the burial of the old sinful nature is symbolised. This old sinful nature is left under the water and the person is then symbolically raised up to new life in Jesus. They are declaring, "I have been crucified with our Messiah and I no longer live, but Jesus lives in me. I live by faith in the Son of God" (Galatians 2:20).

When we are baptised we are willingly, gladly and with joy, associating ourselves with the redemptive work of Calvary. We are washed clean by the blood of Jesus (Revelation 1:5). We are cleansed by the Word of God (John 15:3). Baptism in water is a multi-confession to our belief in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus as foretold by the Old Testament scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3 & 4; Isaiah 53:5 to 12; Psalm 16:10). Baptism makes us part of the body of Jesus our Messiah (1 Corinthians 12:13). Baptism indicates we are finished with the world and have come out of darkness into His marvellous Light (1 Peter 2:9). Baptism is a sign of our repentance (Acts 2:38). We accept that we are a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). Full immersion in water symbolises burial in a watery 'grave' (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12).

Before we are baptised, we need to show evidence of repentance for our sins, faith in our Lord Jesus, have an acceptance of scripture and our lives need to bear evidence of our Christian profession, so people have to be believers in order for their baptism to be effective. Baptism of adult believers is normal because adults can choose and confess their beliefs. Baptism of babies is not scriptural because they cannot choose, nor can they confess their beliefs. There is not one scripture written, regarding infant baptism. All who were baptised in scripture knew what they were doing and chose to be baptised, and all were old enough to make that decision. Infant baptism might make the parents feel good, but does nothing for the baby. That child has to grow old enough to make that decision for themselves, for baptism to be the spiritual experience God intends it to be. Men and women were baptised not children (Acts 8:12).

We need to see if repentance and faith – the two spiritual conditions required – are present before baptism takes place. If repentance and faith are not there, then the baptism will not have God's desired effect. Baptism can only have God's desired effect when the spiritual conditions are met and the person knows they need cleansing; that is why infant baptism is not effective. Babies do not know what sin is and therefore, they cannot repent. They do not know enough to have faith, so we can only be effectively baptised when we are old enough to understand God's purposes for baptism. We are to repent and be baptised and we will be saved. There is a moral responsibility to accept that we have all sinned, and the acceptance of the Saviour is a necessary precondition to baptism. If children are too young to be made aware of their sin, they cannot receive the desired effect of baptism. If there is a person who has Christian parents who may feel it is time their child (teenage or adult) was baptised and push their child into the act of baptism, then that baptism is probably not spiritually effective because the person is not repentant of sin, but is being baptised solely to please their parents or sometimes the church leadership. Where the spiritual preconditions are not present, then clearly the baptism cannot work.

The concept of water baptism was not new to the Jews who lived in Jesus' day. Jews had used the ceremonial bath (a mikveh) for cleansing themselves before the Shabbat Day for hundreds of years before

Jesus came to earth. They would bathe in the specially designed bath to wash away sins before the Shabbat and before offering a sacrifice (Numbers 19:7). Mikveh was the word used to describe the ceremonial baths full of living water (mayim hayim) where 3,000 people were baptised in a single day (Acts 2:41). The Hebrew word for the act of being plunged underwater is 'Tevilah'. It was not called baptism then, because that is a Greek word, and the word baptism was not used until 300 AD when the Bible was translated from the original Hebrew into Greek.

The literal use of the word baptism (tevilah) is to be plunged into water and that describes our Lord's own baptism. He went down into water then came up out of water (Matthew 3:16). John the Baptist baptised people in the Aenon River because there was an abundance of water there (John 3:23). Both Philip and the eunuch went down into water, then up out of the water (Acts 8:38 & 39).

The metaphorical use of the word tevilah is a metaphorical burial. We are 'buried' with Jesus in the waters of baptism (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12).

The scriptural use of the word tevilah is to describe deliverance from past sin. Noah's story of the ark and Moses story of going through the Red Sea is explained in New Testament as a form of baptism, yet neither Noah nor Moses got wet. Noah's experience of water is exactly what baptism is to the Christian; a washing away of the past and being saved through water. The water that could have drowned him actually saved him. The water became God's way of saving Noah for the future. The water separated Noah and his family from their past life and opened up the way to a new life, so baptism corresponds to what Noah went through (1 Peter 3:20 & 21).

The children of Israel were baptised in the Red Sea and in the cloud into Moses, and thus they were brought under the obligation to the Law and the covenant but they went over on dry ground (Exodus 14:22; 1 Corinthians 10:2). There was water on both sides of them and a supernatural cloud (made up of water) was behind them, but they remained dry. The water cut them off from their past life and opened the door to a new life. It washed away their old life (Egypt) and put the Israelites under the authority of Moses who was a 'type' of Messiah. When a Christian is washed through the waters of baptism, his past life and the life of sin is put under the authority of Jesus our Messiah. So we see again, that baptism does for Christians what the Red Sea did for Israel. These two Biblical stories use the word baptise to describe an event in which water achieves something. The water cuts off the old life and brings somebody into a new life; it brings somebody under a new authority. The water is the agent that does it. Studying these two events, the word baptise now means something broader than simply total immersion. It is being used for the event where water is used to cut off the past and opens up a new life for the future.

The Spiritual usage of the word baptism is not being used in connection with water, but with the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist said, "I baptise in water but He will baptise you in the Holy Spirit" (Luke 3:16). The same word was used in both contexts. Jesus repeated John the Baptist's words (Acts 1:5), and the fulfilment of this was ten days later (Acts 2:1 to 4). Pentecost was the fulfilment of what was spoken by the prophet Joel (Acts 2:17 to 21; Joel 2:28 to 32). The word baptise is now being used as a synonym for 'poured out'. Later, to be baptised in the Holy Spirit was to receive Him; to be filled with Him; to have the Spirit 'falling upon' and to have Him imparted through the laying on of hands (Acts 8:15 to 17). The word baptism had become much wider in the New Testament, than it was in the original Hebrew ceremonial bath. It now meant to be drenched in any way, from below or above, even without water. You do not become wet when baptised in the Holy Spirit, yet the scriptures describe it as a baptism.

The Christ-ian usage of the word baptism shows us yet another use for the word baptise. Jesus was speaking to the two apostles James and John, shortly before Jesus went to the cross. "Are you able to be baptised with the baptism with which I am to be baptised?" They replied, "We are able." Jesus told them, "The cup that I drink you will drink and you will be baptised with the baptism with which I am baptised" (Mark 10:38 & 39). Here, the word is being used in a very different way and was an expression of an overwhelming experience of pain and suffering which ended in death. It was a decisive experience that cut Jesus off from His life on earth, to His resurrection and new life in glory. Those scriptures tell us James and John were to suffer a terrible death because Jesus said they would drink the same 'cup' and be baptised with the same 'baptism' as He would, and we know how Jesus died. James was killed with a sword (Acts 12:2) but John lived to be a very old man and described himself as 'the elderly elder' (3 John 1:1). John was with Jesus from the beginning of His ministry, he wrote the epistle of John, plus the three epistles 1, 2 & 3 John, and later the book of Revelation circa 95 AD so we know he would have been very old.

It is interesting to know just how the early Christians understood the word tevilah. A book written in the 1st century AD is the earliest account we have regarding the order of worship in the early church. What they wrote concerning baptism translated from Hebrew to English is this: "Tevilah in this way: Having first rehearsed all these things, immerse them in the name of the Father (Elohim), the Son (Yeshua) and the Holy Spirit (Ruach HaKodesh) in living (flowing) water (mayim hayim). If you have not mayim hayim, tevilah in other (still) water. If you cannot immerse in cold then you may immerse in warm and if you have neither, pour water thrice over the head, in the name of Elohim, Yeshua and Ruach HaKodesh."

The early church baptised adults by full immersion, then baptism slowly diminished to the mere sprinkling of babies. Up until the time of Martin Luther, the church chose infant baptism. A group of believers who were reading the Bible, felt they had to return to believer's baptism and cease infant baptism. They were nicknamed the Anabaptists, which in the language of the day meant the 'twice baptisers' because they were baptising adult believers who had already been baptised as babies. What is not always known, is they baptised by pouring water over the head. Even the first Baptist churches of English people, baptised by pouring. The return of adult baptism by full immersion, began in the Baptist churches, and spread from there to other denominations. The first English Baptist church started in Holland 1609 and not in England. A group of people fled Lincolnshire to escape the religious persecution in England and went with their Bibles to Holland where they were accepted. In 1612, the English people returned to England to start up Baptist churches there, but continued baptising by pouring. It was not until 1641, a man called Richard Blunt said it would be more meaningful to baptise by immersion since it signifies burial. In the English Baptist churches, from that time forward, baptising was done by full immersion. The people who had been baptised by pouring were not rebaptised.

Baptise is not an English word and is rarely translated in the Bible; it is usually transliterated. That means it has been taken over from another language and simply spelt in English letters by phonic pronunciation, but it is not an English word. An example of transliteration is the word rendezvous. We all know what that means but if it were translated into English it would be called a meeting place. English has adopted the word rendezvous, and we have kept it as the French version, and use it in its French form. The British and Foreign Bible Society has a legal clause in the Legal Trust Deed forbidding translation of the word 'baptise' so it has to be transliterated. The reason for this ban – as it is supposed – was because infants were being sprinkled with water as a mode of baptism. If they had translated the word into its original meaning of being immersed, plunged, dipped or sunk fully into water, all of the sprinkled infants would have been declared 'unbaptised'. That would have caused uproar back in 1604 to 1611, when the King James Bible was translated into English.

Baptism is both a physical and a spiritual event. The water is not just symbolic; God is giving water the power to do something within the person. Baptism is the act where the physical and the spiritual are meeting and both are equally important. A vitally important question is this: Is this physical act having the required spiritual result? We need to be careful that the physical event does not overshadow the spiritual result. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for doing just that; for washing their hands (the outside), but they were neglecting the spiritual (the inside) (Matthew 15:2 to 9). While both the physical and spiritual are important, we need to have balance. Baptism is a liquid event in which the water separates a person from their past. It is not what the water is doing (rinsing off the dirt), but what the risen Lord is doing through the water (washing away sin). There is both the human and the divine involved in baptism. It is not just a symbolic act, but an act of obedience and submission in which something spiritual is being done. Paul lists some horrible things the Corinthian folks had done, but he said, 'As such were some of you, but you were washed clean, sanctified and justified (through baptism)' (1 Corinthians 6:1 to 11). What is God doing through baptism? What is the divine side of baptism? It is part of the salvation He wants us to have; saving people from the power of sin. It is a divine cleansing of God, separating us from the old life and giving us a fresh new life. God uses baptism to cleanse our hearts. Believers' baptism as we know, is by full immersion in water. If however, a person has a physical condition preventing them from being baptised by full immersion, then pouring would be acceptable. We cannot refuse to baptise a person because they have a disability. We cannot be caught up with the physical immersion when that is not possible. It is the heart that God sees, and if a person has the correct heart attitude and is unable to have any more than a pouring over the head while sitting in a tub or sitting in a chair outside, then God can honour that just as much because it is a spiritual cleansing.

Most of the teaching on baptism in the New Testament is given to those who were already baptised. It is after baptism that the full meaning is drawn out. If God has truly baptised us, then whatever we read in the scriptures will fit in with our experience and enlarge our understanding of what has taken place. We see our own baptism in this. If God did not baptise us at the time, then when we read a passage we will not be able to connect our experience with the Word. It is not that we need to fully understand the meaning of baptism, but that everything should relate to the Word afterwards and should expand it in our understanding and experience. Baptism is a way of identifying burial with Jesus but it cannot be identified with His crucifixion.

Here are five points to consider: (1) Water is an essential element in baptism. (2) The most meaningful mode is full immersion which should be practiced wherever possible. (3) The inward vital factor in baptism is the work of the risen Lord in cleansing the conscience of the baptised. (4) Where a believer has been baptised, the deciding issue as to its validity, is whether the Lord was active in that baptism to effect the spiritual results. (5) Where full immersion is not possible, it is better to baptise by pouring than not at all. There is no scriptural basis for excluding any believer from baptism and in fact we are not to forbid or refuse baptism (Acts 10:47 & 48).

There is an Old Testament scripture that is symbolic of baptism. In this passage of scripture, God is speaking to Israel regarding their return to their homeland, which as we know, has now happened. In our lifetime, we

have seen the fulfilment of this prophecy. God is cleansing Israel. He said, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you will be clean from all your uncleanness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and will give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will heed My ordinances and do them. You will dwell in the land I gave your fathers, and you will be My people, and I will be your God" (Ezekiel 36:25 to 27). From there God goes on to bless Israel. This is exactly what is happening in Israel today. How marvellous and exciting for us believers, that we have seen this scripture being fulfilled right before our eyes! They are being washed from sin and filled with the Holy Spirit. There are many thousands of Holy Spirit filled, believers in Jesus (Messianic Jews) in Israel and all over the world.

Being baptised in the Holy Spirit is just as important as an act of obedience as being baptised in water. Jesus said we must all be born-again from above to get into the Kingdom of God. That is to be born of water (baptism) and of born of the (Holy) Spirit. Jesus said, "Surely I tell you, unless one is born of water and of the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God!" (John 3:1 to 7).

We will look at the distinction between baptism in water and baptism in the Holy Spirit. The word 'baptise' means to immerse. There are two ways of being immersed. One is to go down under the water, and up again, like in water baptism. The other is having water poured over us, drenching us as though we are standing under a waterfall. That is baptism in the Holy Spirit. Everywhere the Holy Spirit is mentioned in the Bible, it tells us He came down over the people from above and they were totally immersed. They were not sprinkled, but soaked, drenched, filled, overflowed; totally immersed.

All four Gospels teach us specifically, that Jesus will baptise us in the Holy Spirit. 'He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire' (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33). This is the official introduction of Jesus by His forerunner, John the Baptist. After Jesus' resurrection, He was careful to repeat the promise with which John the Baptist had introduced Him in the start of His ministry. Jesus commanded them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for what the Father had promised, of which He said, "John baptised with water, but not many days from now, you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit. You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:4, 5 & 8). 'When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all assembled together in one place when suddenly there came a sound from heaven like the rushing of a mighty wind and it filled the whole house in which they were sitting. There appeared to them tongues resembling fire which settled on each one of them and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Holy Spirit gave them their new language' (Acts 2:1 to 4). John the Baptist said they would be baptised with the Holy Spirit and with fire. There are three successive phases to that experience. (1) It was a baptism as the Holy Spirit immersed them. He came from above and filled the whole house. (2) Each person was individually filled with the Holy Spirit. It was not a collective experience. Each individual person had his personal share. (3) There was a supernatural overflow. Every individual spoke with other languages and tongues. Their hearts were filled and it overflowed out of their mouths.

In every passage of scripture that speaks about people being filled with the Holy Spirit, the next thing they did was speak. Some prophesied, some spoke in tongues, but they all spoke. When our hearts are filled, it overflows through the mouth in speech and that is what happened on the Day of Pentecost. This is where God and man have to co-operate. It is a 50-50 arrangement. We cannot do it all and God will not do it all. God filled them, but they began to speak. The Holy Spirit did not do the speaking, the people did the speaking but the Holy Spirit gave them the language. The disciples had to wait in Jerusalem for ten days for the Holy Spirit to come, but after the Day of Pentecost, there is no record in the scriptures that anyone had to wait for the Holy Spirit. He had already been sent. After the disciples prayed for people, and they met God's conditions, they immediately received the Holy Spirit. We do not need to wait for the Holy Spirit. It is our own choice whether we receive Him or not, and when. If we ask, He will come to us and we will receive Him (Luke 11:13).

The Holy Spirit is a seal of God and He is a deposit or down payment of things to come. 'He Who establishes us with you in Jesus and has anointed us, is God Who also sealed us and gave us the deposit of the Holy Spirit in our hearts' (2 Corinthians 1:21 & 22). 'You, who have heard the Word of Truth; the Gospel of your salvation and have believed on Him, were sealed with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the deposit, guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of His glory' (Ephesians 1:13 & 14). The Holy Spirit is the Baptism which is both visible and audible. It is not something that happens inside of us that cannot be seen by others. He is Someone Who can be seen and heard. He is a seal and a deposit. If we can imagine a seal on a legal document that is imprinted in hot red wax, our seal is like that. We already belong to Jesus, but this publicly identifies us as belonging to Him. We are legally His property. He sets His public, stamped seal upon our foreheads (Ezekiel 9:4; Revelation 7:3; 22:4). We are forever then, set apart by Him and for Him.

If the disciples were not immersed it could not have been a baptism because a baptism is by full immersion. It is possible to be enveloped with the Holy Spirit, but never actually filled. Wherever we read about being filled with the Holy Spirit, the Bible says He came down over them from above. Every person there on the

Day of Pentecost was immersed in the Presence of the Holy Spirit. Once we have received the Holy Spirit, He is in us, He is also with us, around us, over us, in front of us, behind us, all over us. That is total immersion. If we live without this supernatural Presence in our lives, we are living below God's provision for us. When we live with the Holy Spirit, wherever we go, there should be His supernatural Presence in us and with us and we can call on Him anytime, anywhere, day or night.

The New Testament only indicates one seal, or proof that the person has received the Holy Spirit and that is the gift of other tongues, as the Holy Spirit gives the language. It can be a language that is spoken on earth (Acts 2:6 to 12) or it can be a heavenly language of angels (1 Corinthians 13:1). The gift of tongues was the seal the apostles received in their own experience. It was the seal they accepted in others and they never asked for any other seal. We see this vividly in the scriptures (Acts 10:43 to 48 then 15:3), when the Jews did not believe the Gospel was for anybody other than Jews. The Gentiles believed, were forgiven and immediately received the Holy Spirit. They had met God's conditions. The Jews were convinced the Gentiles were saved because they heard them speak with tongues (Acts 11:18). They did not have any other evidence nor did they ask for any other evidence. If we want proof we have been baptised in the Holy Spirit, we need to look at the experience of the apostles. In order to receive the Holy Spirit, we have to be a believer and meet God's conditions, then we need to ask our heavenly Father to give us the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13). The gift of tongues is the proof we have received Him and as the Spirit gives us the language, then we know we have been filled with Him. The New Testament does not offer us any other alternative. Having joy and being happy is not the seal of God. Anybody can feel happy. You do not have to be a Christian to feel happy, but you do have to be a Christian to receive the Holy Spirit. The disciples had great joy (Luke 24:52), but they had not yet received the Holy Spirit.

Some people were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke with tongues before they were baptised in water (Acts 10:46 & 47). The Holy Spirit came down upon them as He had done with the apostles and they all spoke with other tongues. The Holy Spirit is a gift, given impartially to all those who believe and who ask (Acts 11:12, 15 to 17). It is given in a single transaction and is not drawn out. We cannot be half filled now and finish being filled later. We are either filled or we are not filled. The evidence of being filled with the Holy Spirit is the gift of tongues. If people cannot speak with tongues, then they are not filled with the Holy Spirit because that is the proof of the infilling, according to the scriptures. There is no difference in being filled with the Holy Spirit, baptised in the Holy Spirit, immersed in the Holy Spirit, receiving the Holy Spirit or drinking of the Holy Spirit. They are all one and the same and all mean the same thing. The vocal proof of being filled, baptised, immersed, receiving or drinking of the Holy Spirit, is the gift of tongues.

When some people hear others speaking in a language they have never learned, and the speakers are becoming excited, it can put them off side. Some even become offended. Tongues can seem quite silly to unsaved people. Some people thought the disciples were drunk but it was only about 9 am, and Peter said they were not drunk but were acting in response to the promise spoken of by the prophet Joel (Acts 2:13 to 16). Here are two equal opposites. Being filled with the Holy Spirit is the will of the Lord. Sometimes Christians focus on the verse 'Do not get drunk with wine for that is debauchery but be filled with the Holy Spirit' (Ephesians 5:18). They may not get drunk, but they forget it is equally wrong for Christians not to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

The result of being filled with the Holy Spirit is singing praises, making melody in our hearts to the Lord, giving thanks to God in every circumstance (Ephesians 5:19 & 20). Everywhere in the New Testament where it speaks of people being filled with the Holy Spirit, the first immediate expression of that comes out of their mouths. The people in the Bible became excited. They cried, they shouted, they clapped their hands, they groaned, they danced, they sang, they were enthusiastic. There is no substitute for enthusiasm. If we want people to believe in the Gospel of salvation, the best way to convince people is to be enthusiastic about what we have. We have the remedy for sin, sickness, hell and the fear of death. That should be enough to get excited, but we also have the Holy Spirit Who fills us with peace, joy, comfort, hope, guidance etc. That should be enough to have the living waters pour out of our mouth with great enthusiasm. 'May the God of Hope fill us with all joy and peace, in believing that we may overflow in hope, by the power of the Holy Spirit' (Romans 15:13).

In the New Testament there are two ways the Holy Spirit is administered. One way is directly from heaven. He just comes down on people as He did on the day of Pentecost. The other way is being imparted to new believers with the laying on of hands by those who already have the Holy Spirit. The apostles were not satisfied with the fact these people had been wonderfully saved, they wanted the people to receive the Holy Spirit. 'The apostles laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit' (Acts 8:17). Ananias laid his hands on Saul/Paul so Paul could be healed and receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17). Then later Paul laid his hands on people in Ephesus and they received the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:6).

When we are baptised in the Holy Spirit, it brings us into the realm of the supernatural. It is the only realm in which the Gospel can be effectively preached. We receive supernatural power from God to be His witnesses. These are the last recorded words of Jesus on earth. "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth"

(Acts 1:8). This is where Jesus indicates the Gospel would go to the Gentiles who were at 'the ends of the earth'. The message of the Gospel is supernatural. Jesus was supernaturally born to an innocent young woman who had been spoken to by an angel; Jesus healed the sick and gave life to the dead; Jesus rose from the dead and spoke to people after He had died and had risen again. These are not natural events. If we are going to testify about supernatural events, we need supernatural power. We need power to have supernatural utterances from the Holy Spirit. 'Do not be anxious about what you are to say, but say whatever is given to you in that hour for it is not you who will be speaking, but the Holy Spirit' (Mark 13:11). We need supernatural guidance and supernatural strength to endure persecution and overcome insurmountable difficulties. We all need an individual supernatural experience. Just having Biblical theology is not enough. We need to be empowered to show signs and wonders like the apostles did (Romans 15:19). Jesus said, "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out evil spirits, freely without charge" (Matthew 10:8). Jesus never retracted that statement so we need to do what He told us to do. The first Person Who preached the Gospel of the Kingdom was Jesus and it was confirmed by the eyewitnesses and the signs and wonders He did. If anyone needed power to be God's witness, it was Simon Peter. Peter was so afraid of being caught up with Jesus at the time of the crucifixion, he denied Jesus three times (Matthew 26:70 to 74). After Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit, he had amazing power to preach with boldness (Acts 4:13), and the first time Peter ever preached the Gospel, 3,000 people were saved in one day (Acts 2:41). Soon afterwards, a further 5,000 people were saved (Acts 4:4). Peter healed the sick (Acts 3:6). The book of Acts is filled with miracles the Lord did through Peter's newfound courage, strength and faith. The disciples were not called apostles until after they had received the Holy Spirit.

There is another reason why we receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is to produce unity in the body. Jesus baptises us with the Holy Spirit into His collective body. The purpose of the baptism with the Holy Spirit is to make us one, united body. 'For by one Holy Spirit we were baptised into one body, and all, whether Jews or Gentiles, slaves or free, made to drink of one Holy Spirit' (1 Corinthians 12:13). Three times in that verse, Paul uses the word 'one'. It does not matter what our race, colour, denomination, country or language, if we are baptised with the Holy Spirit, then we are part of the body of Jesus and we are one. We need to live our lives that way and love our fellow believer. There is only one Holy Spirit and there is only one body of Jesus. That was God's purpose.

This is a challenge to churches everywhere. The early church frequently manifested the signs, wonders and gifts of the Spirit, but the modern church is living way below the will of God. Many churches do not have deliverances from evil spirits; some do not have Holy Spirit worship; complete, divine healings are rare and in the western world, having people raised from the dead almost never happens. The sermons are usually very narcissistic, intellectual, dignified and sometimes the speaker quotes a few scriptures but in most churches, the emphasis is more on money than salvation of souls. Some people are getting saved and that is wonderful, but the spiritual growth of modern Christians is stunted to say the least. There is far too much division and animosity between some churches and between Christians who attend the same church! The modern church is not God's best and they usually quench the Holy Spirit. He simply cannot operate in some churches. In order for Jesus to come for His bride without 'spot and wrinkle', the church is going to have to change dramatically! Churches operate far short of the scriptural standards of the Bible, both in the level of holiness and the gifts of the Spirit. If we study the book of Acts, we see the miracles done by the apostles. How many churches today, regularly have those miracles? Very few! The excuse people use for the lack of miracles is usually, "God does not do miracles today like He used to." That is a cop-out. The reason the Lord cannot do miracles today is lack of faith, lack of true worship, lack of spiritual maturity, lack of a disciplined prayer life, lack of holiness, too much unbelief, too much focus on the world, sport, finance and material possessions, too few people are prepared to speak out for righteousness, too few men in leadership are prepared to listen to those who do try to speak out, too few are really listening to what the Spirit is trying to say to the churches (Revelation chapters 2 & 3). We only have to read the New Testament to see the church in this age is grossly inadequate. Revival cannot come until the church wakes up to its complacency and dullness of spirit!

So now, back to the intended text. There are seven easy steps to receiving the Holy Spirit. (1 & 2) 'Repent and be baptised, every one of you (Acts 2:38). (3) We need to know in our hearts, that we need the Holy Spirit so we can be effective witnesses. We need to desire a close relationship with the Lord, or in other words, we need to thirst for Him, knowing the only way, is to 'drink' of Him (John 4:14; 7:37 to 39). (4) We need to come to Jesus. If we want the baptism we need to come to the Baptist (John 1:33). (5) We need to ask (Luke 11:13). (6) We need to receive Him. 'Jesus breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit"' (John 20:22). (7) We need to speak (Acts 2:4). When you are seeking baptism in the Holy Spirit, do not remain silent. Speak in an audible voice, and then the Holy Spirit will fill you and you will speak in a language you have never learned. When that happens, you will also be filled with unspeakable joy! 'Whom not having known, you love Him. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the result of your faith, the salvation of your souls' (1 Peter 1:8).

Amen and God bless you.

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